

**Testimony IN SUPPORT of House Bill No. 6578 - An Act Concerning Participation
in the Electoral Process and IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill No. 1017- An Act
Concerning Election Administration**

March 10th, 2021

Dear Senator Mae Flexer (Co-Chair), Representative Dan Fox (Co-Chair), Senator Rob Sampson (Ranking Member), Representative Gale Mastrofrancesco (Ranking Member) and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee:

My name is Judy Villa; I am a voter from Cheshire, CT. "Passing HB 6578, but with needed improvement, is extremely important to me because not only codifying but also expanding Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) beyond the Dept. of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to other state agencies is a common-sense reform that saves taxpayer money and helps increase democratic participation." Expanding AVR to the Dept. of Social Services (DSS), HUSKY, Access Health CT, state colleges and universities and other state agencies would allow an integrated online voter registration (OVR) system that would provide verifications and protections against accidental duplicate registrations and any outright attempts at voter fraud.

I also support SB 1017 as it provides restoration of voting rights to people on parole, ending a regressive system that disproportionately affects minorities. Additionally, this bill reauthorizes the use of secure ballot drop boxes.

Beyond my support for these common-sense bills bringing Connecticut into the 21st century, I wish to state my view that blocking and delaying opening the State Constitution smacks of voter suppression. Statistics show that Connecticut voters want more accessibility. Needing more options for registration and casting ballots does not signify laziness in voters but rather speaks to the complexity of people's lives. The sandwich generation is real; caring for elderly family, parenting children, working at jobs that do not provide flexibility on Election Day are real responsibilities that often hamper civic engagement more than recognized--not only during the pandemic. Voters who are elderly or disabled need options too. Parolees who have paid their debt to society deserve the rights of full citizenship as they re-integrate into society.

Just today I received an email from Rep. Fishbein (House-90th) explaining the expansion of DMV online virtual access to licenses and other ID forms. If DMV records can secure people's information, then it makes sense to increase AVR through DMV and other state agencies to assist citizens.

I fear that arguments against expanding AVR and other measures to remove restrictions on voting access in Connecticut are an example of the proposed 253 bills in 43 states designed to impede access. If these efforts are states' rights pushback on HR1, For the People Act and other federal bills like the John Lewis Act designed to increase voting rights, then that would be a sad rationale here in Connecticut. Expanding registration and balloting procedures facilitates free and fair elections, allowing people to exercise their right and duty despite all the other duties everyone juggles.

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